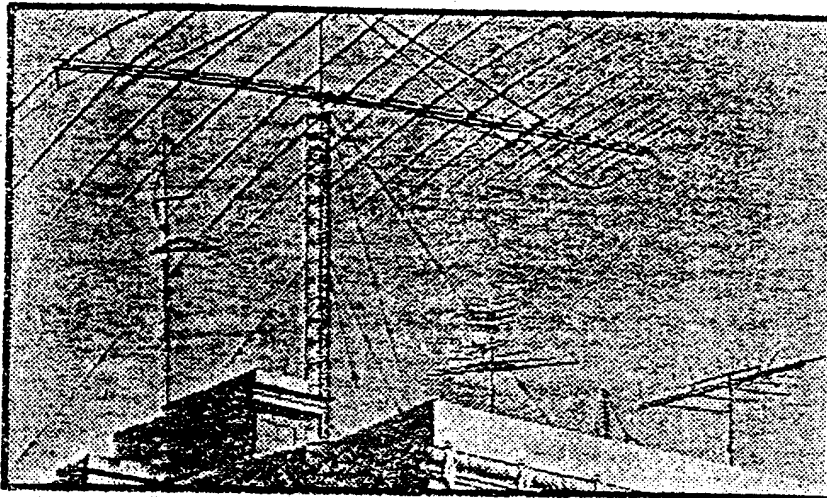


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Russians Deny the Use Of Antennas for Spying



The New York Times/Teresa Zabala

Antennas on the roof of the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

By LYNN ROSELLINI
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18 — The Soviet Embassy has denied that rooftop antennas on its 16th Street chancery are used for intelligence-gathering. The embassy says that the purpose of the equipment is to maintain radio communication with Moscow.

But Theodore Gardner, special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's field office here, repeated his earlier statement that some of the antennas were used to monitor telephone calls by Government officials and others. Mr. Gardner has said that the electronic surveillance is under the direction of the K.G.B., the Soviet Union's intelligence and internal-security agency.

Mr. Gardner also maintained that an article on the Washington Talk page of The New York Times on Dec. 11, outlining the intelligence-gathering use of some of the antennas, was correct.

Calls Were Not Returned

Telephone calls made to the Soviet Embassy in an effort to get information for the original Times article went unanswered earlier this month. But after the article appeared, Valentin Kamenev, the Embassy press counselor, wrote a letter of complaint to the editor of the Times.

"The antenna on the roof of the Soviet Embassy," Mr. Kamenev wrote, "was installed and has been used under U.S.S.R.-U.S.A. bilateral agreement of June 23, 1969 for one

reciprocal basis the same type of antenna has been installed on the roof of the American Embassy in Moscow.

"The antenna, necessary for long distance (Moscow is about 5,000 miles away from Washington, D.C.) transmissions, was installed in compliance with the rules of the District of Columbia. The radio transmitter itself operates in accordance with the International Convention on long distance communication as well as U.S. regulations for international radio and telegraph communications.

"It should also be noted that the type of the antenna has been selected on the advice of the Department of State and purchased in this country."

'We Know Better' Than F.B.I.

After The Times received Mr. Kamenev's letter, a reporter telephoned Mr. Gardner, who repeated his earlier statement that some of the antennas are used for surveillance. Asked for comment, Mr. Kamenev said, "We know better what we have on the roof or even under the roof than such organizations as the F.B.I."

On Friday, Attorney General William French Smith said in a speech in Los Angeles that Russian spying in the United States had increased sharply in recent years. Mr. Smith said that one-third of all Soviet bloc personnel at embassies and other foreign installations here "are believed to be full-time intelligence officers."

Mr. Gardner said earlier that while the rooftop equipment at the embassy might well include routine transmitters, there were also antennas that had microwave intercepting capabilities.